



President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief U.S. Mission to South Africa

Emergency Plan Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1, 2005



Welcome

to the first issue of the South Africa Emergency Plan Newsletter. This newsletter is designed as a service to all Emergency Plan partners. Please let us know:

- whether you find this information useful;
- what other information you would like to see included in upcoming newsletters;
- how often you would like to receive a newsletter; and
- whether you would be willing to contribute information for the newsletter.

Please also forward updates to the distribution list. We can be reached through southafricapepfar@state.gov. We hope you enjoy reading the first South Africa Emergency Plan Newsletter.

In this Issue:

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- South Africans get help for AIDS
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News on the Web:

<http://pepfar.pretoria.usembassy.gov>

- U.S. Announces New Funding for Study of Alternative HIV/AIDS Therapies
- Teachers' Unions Launch HIV/AIDS Project



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First Anniversary of the Themba Lethu Clinic



Assistant Secretary Frazer and Dr. Rispel (Gauteng Department of Health) standing beside the Themba Lethu plaque

Following is the text of Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer remarks at the Themba Lethu first anniversary celebration:

Thank you for the invitation to speak today at this important event, which commemorates a hopeful time in the history of South Africa and a remarkable partnership involving our two countries. As many of you know, this is my first visit back to South Africa since I completed my short, but much enjoyed time, as U.S. Ambassador during 2004 and 2005. It is a special pleasure to visit a place where despair is being replaced by hope and where the challenge of HIV and AIDS is being met by dedicated, competent health professionals who are saving lives – setting an example for the entire nation.

It is also a real pleasure to be here at the Helen Joseph Hospital. As you all know, Helen Joseph founded the Federation of South African Women and was a symbol of defiance, integrity and courage for forty years of struggle against apartheid. It is so appropriate that a hospital which formerly provided care primarily to only one part of society now is open to all. And it is inspirational that in this hospital, Helen Joseph's courage is now manifesting in the staff of the Themba Lethu clinic and in the determination of its patients. It takes courage to come forward to be tested for HIV and determination to follow-through with the only known effective AIDS treatment – the daily use of anti-retroviral therapy. Truly, if she were alive today, Helen Joseph would be very proud of what is being commemo-

rated here. The United States is fortunate to be a partner in this effort and we are honoured to have played a small role in the establishment of this life-saving program.

During my year as Ambassador in South Africa, I heard many times about the partnership formed by the Department of Health, Right To Care and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, to assure effective AIDS treatment reached the people of Johannesburg as quickly as possible. Now that I see this partnership in action, and the clinic it has produced, I understand why this clinic is among the most outstanding HIV/AIDS care facilities in the country.

While our contribution of resources is important, we fully understand that the most essential contributions in this effort are provided by the Government of South Africa, the Gauteng Department of Health and the medical community, as represented by Right To Care.

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First Anniversary of the Themba Lethu Clinic

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As we celebrate your first very successful year of antiretroviral treatment at the Themba Lethu clinic, we recognize that this year of accomplishment builds on a 15-year history of HIV/AIDS service to the community and on the efforts of some very hard-working individuals.

These individuals include: Dr. Dennis Rubel and Sister Sue Roberts – the clinical director and nursing manager of the clinic; Dr. Ian Sanne, the visionary leader of Right To Care, the clinic pharmacists and social workers who have worked tirelessly, the community AIDS response team and all their volunteers who support patients every day, and the many other members of the dedicated Themba Lethu care provider team. Without your support we know this year of success would not have been possible. We also know that without the support of the hospital administrators and Dr. Gwen Ramagopa, and her colleagues in the Department of Health, your efforts would have been much more difficult. By working together you all are saving South African women, children and men – the rest of the world is inspired by your success.

And just what is this success? Building on a program of HIV and AIDS care, Helen Joseph Hospital was well positioned to become one of the first accredited facilities to provide ARV therapy following the National Cabinet's decision to begin AIDS treatment in public health facilities. At the same time, the United States Emergency Plan was able to provide resources through Right To Care to help the hospital renovate and equip a specialized HIV/AIDS clinic and to implement an ARV treatment program. Remarkably, with the unwavering support of the Department of Health, all this was accomplished in record time so that by the middle of 2004 patients already were being enrolled in ARV-based AIDS treatment protocols. I understand that the Zulu name Themba Lethu was chosen by the patients and staff of the clinic because it means "our hope for the future". In truth, it is the patients and the staff, even more than the clinic, that are our "hope for the future" and we are here today to sing your praises for what you have accomplished.

Themba Lethu also is remarkable because it integrates HIV treatment, care and support in an academic hospital that closely links implementation and treatment research. The partnership formed between the Department of Health, the University of the Witwatersrand, and Right-To-Care, using Emergency Plan support, has made this clinic a "centre of excellence" for AIDS care, treatment, and research. This excellence is manifest in the fact that over 3700 patients have started antiretroviral therapy since April 2004. In recent weeks, the clinic has been able to provide ARV therapy to an additional 100 patients each week.

Clinic staff currently follows over 6000 patients with HIV to monitor their condition and provide treatment when needed. At the same time, the clinic staff counsels and tests up to 600 people each month. This would be a remarkable record of achievement in any setting but in a resource-limited public health clinic, it is nothing short of miraculous...and, I understand, the clinic still feels it can do more. Let me assure you, that as you do more we will continue to help as long as our help is needed.

Our commitment, through our partnership with Right To Care and the Government of South Africa, is to continue to train health care workers, to provide education and counselling for patients, to supply doctors, nurses and counselors, and to support specialised laboratory testing. Nationally, we are working with the Department of Health and with Right To Care to initiate and/or

scale up another 13 national roll-out sites in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape Provinces. Through this direct support Right To Care plans to assist the government to initiate a further 9,500 patients on treatment in the next year and 12,000 patients in 2007.

Of the 3,700 people on treatment at Themba Lethu today, over 2,300 of them are celebrating more than one year on successful therapy. This ceremony is really for them and their families. It is recognition of the birthdays, marriages, graduations, work achievements, and family dinners they have enjoyed together during this year – personal events made possible by the work of Themba Lethu.

Often, now that I am back in Washington, I am asked about South Africa and its future. Often the questions include what is being done to address AIDS. Today, I think we all see why my answer is that much is being done and South Africa has a bright future. The partnerships envisioned in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief are producing real results in South Africa. Together we are saving lives because health care providers, public health institutions, the South African Government at all levels, and most importantly those infected with HIV are coming forward to take courageous, dedicated action – just as Helen Joseph did during the apartheid years. I am inspired by what you are accomplishing. And, on behalf of the people of the United States, I thank you for this celebration of hope.

Happy Birthday, Themba Lethu and Viva Themba Lethu!!!

Right to Care

Right to Care is a non-profit organisation incorporated under section 21 of the Companies Act No. 61 of 1973. Two South African doctors established the organisation in 2001. The aim was to implement an Expert Treatment programme that provides innovative chronic HIV care service which builds public and private sector capacity and facilitates access to affordable antiretroviral therapy.

In 2001, Right to Care received its initial start-up funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to build institutional capacity and establish organisational infrastructure required to support the implementation of Right to Care's Expert Treatment Program.

Contact Right to Care

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Community Based Organizations Sign HIV/AIDS Small Grants



Mr. Steve Smith from the U.S. Embassy with community members signing the HIV/AIDS Small Grants intended for grass-roots services

On September 23, the U.S. Embassy signed several grants providing nearly R540,000 to community-based organizations in the Pretoria region for grass-roots programs to battle HIV/AIDS.

The money will fund a wide array of hospice and home-based care for AIDS patients. One grant will buy a generator to allow Moletjie Community Radio expand its HIV/AIDS awareness programs conducted at schools throughout rural Limpopo.

In expressing thanks for the funding at a grant-signing ceremony at the U.S. Embassy, Moletjie Deputy Chairman Kgabo Hala said that “as a country we are trying to do whatever is possible to have a better life.”

At the ceremony, U.S. Health Attache Gray Handley said the small grants fill an important role in HIV/AIDS funding. While much funding has gone to large programs at the national and provincial level, the small grants are designed to get money directly to the people who provide grass-roots services on a day-to-day basis.

The Pretoria-area grants are part of a nationwide program that will provide \$450,000 to 51-community-based organizations on the front lines of the fight against HIV/AIDS. The money is provided through the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), whose programs are implemented in close coordination with the South African Government and are designed to support the Government’s HIV/AIDS and STD Strategic Plan.

South Africans Get Help for AIDS and Give Hope to Others

South African Zulu people have rich cultures and languages that span centuries. The province of KwaZulu-Natal is still inhabited mainly by Zulu people, united by democracy as home to all the country’s race groups. The collective population of more than 9 million is now battling one of their fiercest ever foes: HIV/AIDS.

The President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is assisting people along the Indian Ocean battle-front against AIDS. Resources are being used creatively and effectively by McCord Hospital in the heart of the province, Durban city. Founded 95 years ago by American missionary, Dr. James McCord, to “*serve the under-served*”, the Hospital’s dedicated and compassionate medical staff has pioneered HIV/AIDS services in the region in recent years. McCord’s practical and constructive response to the magnitude of HIV/AIDS patients encompasses medical, psychological, family/social and economic support.



A Proud Nurse from MaCord's Hospital

HIV patient, Thandi Madondo, appreciated McCord’s treatment for her AIDS symptoms and help for her family to learn more about HIV. She wanted to help destitute people in remote communities to come to McCord’s for support, so she started

teaching bead-craft skills to other people with AIDS. The Hospital provided raw materials to the craft class. Thandi named her group, “Sinikithemba”—Zulu for “*we give hope*”. McCord’s found several markets for the crafts, including the U.S. and South African governments. After Thandi’s death, Sinikithemba became the official name of McCord’s HIV/AIDS Clinic.

PEPFAR support has enhanced Sinikithemba Clinic’s antiretroviral treatment (ART) services to individuals and their families in several ways. Sinikithemba has refocused its core business from a general HIV clinic to an ART-specific center. McCord’s has set up a special clinic for ART preparation covering counseling, screening (CD4 tests), psychosocial assessment and adherence training.

Counselors have been trained to enroll and prepare patients in groups for ART, streamlining the process by taking over the role previously handled by doctors.

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South Africans Get Help for AIDS and Give Hope to Others

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A booking system for monthly scheduling of groups of patients has been developed to predict the flow of patients and maximize efficiencies in providing care.

Some of the HIV positive women and men have formed a singing group called the Sinikithemba Choir. Supported by McCord Hospital, the 15-member Choir sings locally and internationally at churches, high schools and conferences. Choir members tell audiences about their HIV status and experiences of living with AIDS. Through the Choir and sale of CDs of their music, choir members have gained a sense of purpose while raising money to buy drugs to treat their disease. Choir director, Phumulani Kunene, was diagnosed with HIV in January 2000, enduring the ordeal of learning his status without counseling. He said, "Our aim is to put a face on this epidemic...a face that is having hope, a face that is alive."

McCord has established a Pediatric ART Clinic with assistance from PEPFAR funding so the hospital could increase the number of children on treatment from 0 to 60 during 2004. Children are supported by a cohesive multidisciplinary team (MDT) that operates 2 days a week, with plans to expand to 3 or 4 days per week. After much searching, a qualified part-time pediatrician was recruited to work with the Pediatric ART team from November 2004. Further MDT assistance reaches chil-

dren in a nearby orphanage with treatment and support to dispel fears and discrimination. A staff member says, "The weekly MDT meetings are going so well, everyone feels free to present cases and ask question, improving the quality of the patient care."

McCord's has used PEPFAR financial support to strengthen the hospital's Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) program, a principle point of entry for Sinikithemba's ART program. McCord is able to provide "highly active" ART (HAART) to eligible pregnant women, as well as Nevirapine for mothers and babies during delivery. Mothers of newborns previously suffered long anxious waiting periods before learning their babies' fates. Dr. Reshmi Maharaj of McCord's PMTCT section said, "So far, none of the pregnant women who have used HAART has had a baby who has tested HIV positive. There is nothing as wonderful as telling a woman, 7 weeks after the birth, that the baby has tested HIV negative. Her smile is so heart-warming".

McCord Hospital superintendent and visionary, Dr. Helga Holst, describes HIV as "the single greatest social and health problem the world has ever

faced". She says South Africa is in the midst of the epidemic, with Durban statistically at the epicenter. She has watched the storm of sickness waylay medical staff as well as patients: "The magnitude of death and despondency in our community was being transmitted to doctors and nurses who wanted to help, but couldn't because the resources weren't there and the problem is so huge."

Dr. Holst is grateful for PEPFAR's "hands reaching across oceans to assist us in this enormous need so we can, in turn, assist others." Resources flowing from PEPFAR have enabled Dr. Holst to put life-changing plans into place through a unique hospital-based community HIV/AIDS Center that also supports local orphanages and communities. She says, "People who should be dead are alive today, filled with joy knowing they have a second chance in life, and wanting to do something meaningful with their lives to impact others." Many of these people are making heart-felt contributions using their nimble fingers to make and sell crafts. Others volunteer and help the sick and suffering in their communities so they, too, can help HIV positive people rediscover hope through McCord's professional and loving care.

Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation

The Foundation creates a future of hope for children and families worldwide by eradicating pediatric AIDS, providing care and treatment to people with HIV/AIDS, and accelerating the discovery of new treatments for other serious and life-threatening pediatric illnesses.

www.pedaids.org

Notice Board

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT Emergency Plan Partner's Meeting "Quality of Care" 7-9 February 2006

This is a first announcement of a planned joint meeting of USG Emergency Plan partners involved in CT, PMTCT, TB/HIV, Treatment and Palliative Care activities. The need for such a forum is apparent due to the integrated nature of many partner activities and, in South Africa, the massive burden of both TB and HIV. This recognition has led many partners to increase their focus on screening, diagnosis and treatment of TB among HIV clients and on HIV testing, care and treatment services among TB patients. Similarly, there is an urgent need to ensure integration of services and referrals between key programs, notably CT and PMTCT.

The draft objectives for this workshop are:

1. To review the tenets of integrated activities and facilitate the sharing of experiences that contribute to improving quality of care.
2. To explore avenues for expanded activities across geographic and activity areas among all partners.
3. To broaden linkages and referral networks between partners, and TB and HIV programs at every level.

The meeting Planning Committee anticipates a series of thematic plenary sessions and technical area break-outs/workshops.

We are most interested in sharing experiences about best practices and other innovative tools that partners have developed to maximize scope, efficiency and effectiveness of HIV services.

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For example:

1. Roundtable discussions led by partners with ART adherence of >90%: what works, what to do differently, etc.
2. Strategies to reduce maternal-child transmission to <10%.
3. Innovative approaches to improving TB case-holding across referral networks.

Your ideas for meeting topics are most welcome! We want to ensure that we address the most critical issues from a provider perspective. If you would like to lead a discussion with a relevant presentation, please inform us. Please communicate with the Planning Committee via email to Bill Coggin (CogginW@sa.cdc.gov).

Please diarize these dates. The "Enhancing Quality of Care" Meeting as expected to take place in the Pretoria/Johannesburg area 7-9 February.

Further details will follow.

Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy

The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy would be happy to assist your organization in publicizing its Emergency Plan-supported activities. If you would like our assistance with press releases, media management, success story preparation, etc.

Please contact Embassy Information Officer:

Mark Schlachter
084 950 0679
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South Africa Emergency Plan Calendar

November, 2005	
November 1-4	Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Film Project
November 14	Annual Report Due to Office of U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator
November 30	HMIS Partner Meeting, Centurion
World AIDS Day Events	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope Worldwide Event – Constitutional Hill, JHB • Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, BMS Pediatric Aids Unit, Maseru, Lesotho (Tentative) • KZN Event to Commemorate Small Grants, Nov. 30 • When Life Happens Festival, with Joburg Consulate Sponsorship <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Youth Urban Culture Festival - Newtown Dec 3 12:30 b. Family Concert in the Park – Newtown Dec 4 14:00 • Masibambisane / Phidisa Events in Pretoria • OGAC DVC with partner participation • HSRC/NMF Study Launch • PAS Musician Program 	
December, 2005	
December 5-9	Visit of the Institute of Medicine
January, 2006	
TBD	John Stover "Costing Workshop"
February, 2006	
February 7-9	Partners Technical Meeting (ARV Treatment, TB, CT, PMTCT, Palliative Care)
March, 2006	
TBD	M&E Training
TBD	Distribution of Semi-Annual Report Instructions
April, 2006	
TBD	OVC Partner Technical Meeting
TBD	Semi-Annual Report Instructions Distributed to Partners
TBD	Semi-Annual Report Information Due from Partners
May, 2006	
TBD	Prevention Partner Technical Meeting
June, 2006	
TBD	Annual Meeting for South Africa PEPFAR Partners
TBD	Annual Meeting for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
July, 2006	
TBD	COP Instructions and Funding Levels Distributed to Partners
August, 2006	
TBD	COP Templates Due from Partners
September, 2006	
September 29	FY07 COP due to Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator